



SURVIVOR TREE: WITNESS TO TRAGEDY SYMBOL OF STRENGTH

It is more than 80 years old. An American Elm Tree in the heart of downtown Oklahoma City, it survived the bomb's blast and witnessed one of the worst terrorist attacks on American soil. Today, we call it the Survivor Tree.

Before the bombing, the tree was important because it provided the only shade in the downtown parking lot. People would arrive early to work just to be able to park under the shade of the tree's branches.

On April 19, 1995, the tree was almost chopped down to recover pieces of evidences that hung from its branches due to the force of the 4,000 pound bomb that killed 168 and injured hundreds just yards away. Evidence was retrieved from the branches and the trunk of the tree.

When hundreds of community citizens, family members of those who were killed, survivors and rescue workers came together to write the Memorial Mission Statement, one of its resolutions dictated that "one of the components of the Memorial must be the Survivor Tree located on the south half of the Journal Record Building block."

Rowland Denman, the Memorial Foundation's volunteer Executive Director and Richard Williams, District Manager for the General Services Administration Oklahoma division, called upon the expertise of Mark Bays, an urban forester with the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry. Bays developed a plan to save the tree and has taken it on as his project for the last nine years. The asphalt that lined the parking lot was pulled away from the tree to begin improving the conditions around it. Seeds were taken and seedlings were grown. The tree began to thrive.

The Memorial design was unveiled in 1996 with a prominence put on this ancient elm. Designers Hans and Torrey Butzer wrote in their plans submitted for the Memorial, "...by creating a level ground plane along Fifth Street, the resulting site contours would emphasize the high point or promontory on which the Survivor Tree now stands. Thus, the Survivor Tree and its cascading terraces become the perfect counter-point to the sloping Murrah Building Footprint across Fifth Street."

The final Memorial design included this important promontory. Because the roots of the tree ran so deep, the promontory was put on piers so that there would be no damage to the tree's root system. Each pier was hand dug by Bays and the construction crew. The design also included an aeration and irrigation system underneath the promontory, which permits the air and water to get underneath the tree's roots. This state of the art system allows the tree to receive the appropriate amount of water and air to keep it growing for years to come

Cuttings of the Survivor Tree are growing in nurseries all over Oklahoma. Owners of landscape nurseries, arborists, urban foresters and expert horticulturists from across the state and country have come together to work and preserve this piece of history. None of these people have ever charged the Memorial for their work. Each year, the Facilities and Grounds crew at the Memorial provides Bays and the nursery men hundreds of seeds. They plant the seeds and distribute the resulting saplings each year on the anniversary of the bombing. In 2006, the Memorial partnered with American Forests, the nation's oldest conservation organization, to preserve the Survivor Tree's living legacy. The saplings from the Survivor Tree are now available for purchase through the American Forests Historic Tree Program. Today, thousands of Survivor Trees are growing in public and private places all over the world.

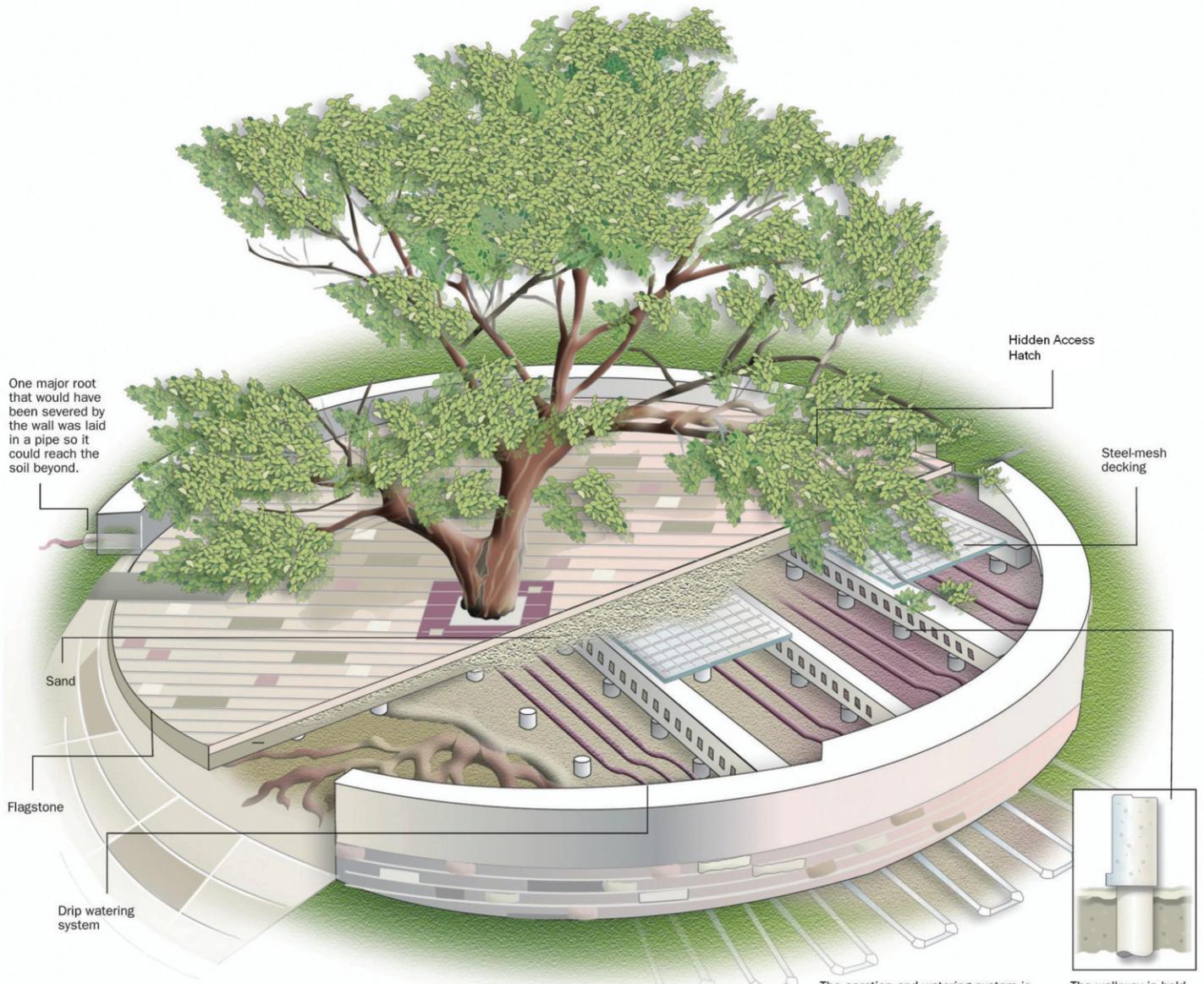
"The Memorial is grateful to Mark Bays, and the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry for their long standing commitment to the Survivor Tree," said Kari Watkins, Executive Director of the Oklahoma City National Memorial. "The tree is a beautiful symbol today thanks to Mark's work and those he has reached out to across the state, who take seeds and return tree saplings the following spring."

The Survivor Tree is a symbol of human resilience. Today, as a tribute to renewal and rebirth, the inscription around the tree reads, "The spirit of this city and this nation will not be defeated; our deeply rooted faith sustains us."





SURVIVOR TREE CONSTRUCTION PLAN DIAGRAM



One major root that would have been severed by the wall was laid in a pipe so it could reach the soil beyond.

Hidden Access Hatch

Steel-mesh decking

Sand

Flagstone

Drip watering system

The aeration and watering system is about 3 feet deep at the original grade and extends 15 feet from the wall.

The walkway is held up by a grid of about 85 piers, some as deep as 18 feet. Crews hand dug each hole to ensure no roots were cut. One row of planned piers had to be moved because it exactly followed a root.